

CIA/0861/PN 62.2638/5/74

SUEZ CANAL STATISTICS--PRE-JUNE 1967

SECRET/SENSITIVE

MAY 1974

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(Suez Canal)

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QTA/OCGI/PN 62.2688/5

CANAL STATISTICS -- PRE-JUNE 1967

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Length (Port Said to Port Taufiq)	162.50 kms. (101 miles)
Length of man-made cuts	122.50 kms. (76 miles)
Length of sections within Lake Timsah and Great Bitter Lake	40.00 kms. (25 miles)
Width at water level	160 to 200 meters (525 to 656 feet)
Maximum permissible draft	11.58 meters (38 feet)

Banks of man-made sections are revetted to reduce erosion.

By-passes are at Port Said, Ballah, and Kabrit.

OBSTRUCTIONS -- AS OF OCTOBER 1973

The canal is blocked by sunken vessels near Port Said at the northern end, near Ismailia in the central part, and near Port Taufiq at the southern end. Two medium-sized ships were sunk near Port Said -- a 438-foot (8,252-ton) passenger ship at kilometer 7.5 and another smaller ship near by. Two cement-laden barges -- reportedly kept there expressly for the purpose of blocking the canal in case of war -- were sunk near Ismailia. A large tug was also sunk near Ismailia; a dipper dredge at kilometer 82; and possibly another dredge in near by Lake Timsah. At the southern end the canal is blocked by a small oil tanker and a ferryboat. In all there may be as many as 14 vessels sunk in the canal, including those identified above, but we are not certain how many are actually blocking the shipping channels. The major obstructions added during the 1973 War are three earthen causeways (two Israeli and one Egyptian) that were built partially across the canal.

TRAPPED SHIPS

Sixteen merchant ships were caught when the canal was blocked in 1967. Fourteen of these ships are in Great Bitter Lake; one is in Lake Timsah; and one (an Egyptian tanker) is moored on the west bank of the by-pass at kilometer 60.

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PROSPECTS FOR OPENING THE CANAL

At its 1967 depth of 38 feet the Suez Canal could accommodate vessels including: 1) laden oil tankers up to an average of 50,000 deadweight tons (DWT) and tankers in ballast up to an average of 150,000 DWT -- i.e. the types of tankers that comprise about 40 percent of the world's tanker tonnage; 2) nearly all cargo and passenger ships; and 3) naval vessels of cruiser size or smaller. These categories include all of the Soviet naval and merchant ships except a few of their largest oil tankers.

Estimates of the time required to clear the canal of debris vary, but the most optimistic estimate is four-to-six months, at a cost of at least \$30 million. This includes the clearing of hundreds of thousands of undetonated mines of all sorts and tons of unexploded munitions lying on both sides of the canal. The restoration of supporting facilities will take at least one year. Until a thorough survey of the amount of silt to be removed has been made, it is not possible to predict exactly how long dredging will take. It is unlikely, however, that the silting has been excessive. If the dredging operation proves to be minimal, the canal might possibly be opened for ship passage in eight or nine months, but without all of the supporting facilities in operation.

SOVIET CONCERN

There have been reports that the Soviets are concerned that U.S. and British teams are helping to clear the canal because they expect to find sophisticated and possibly secret weapons lying on the bottom of the canal. These reports are probably exaggerated; the Russians are concerned because the U.S. and British teams are there at all. There is little likelihood that there are any weapons on the canal bottom that differ from those strewn all over the Sinai and that have been picked over by the Israelis. No reports have been received of such "treasure" at the bottom of the canal.

U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN CLEARING OPERATIONS

Our knowledge of participation of U.S. military units in canal clearing operations is incomplete, primarily because many of the terms and limits of U.S. participation are still

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being negotiated. We understand that the Amphibious Assault Ship, Iwo Jima, and two U.S. Navy mine counter-measure units with a total of 12 helicopters will participate. The possibility of stationing the helicopters and their crews of Marine helicopter repairmen on the British military base of Cyprus is being considered, but the Government of Cyprus has not yet given its consent. The helicopters would be shipped from the U.S., assembled on Cyprus, and stationed on the Iwo Jima during the clearing operations. Negotiations are in progress for sending teams of U.S. Navy and/or Army teams of demolition experts to train Egyptians for clearing unexploded munitions along both sides of the canal. U.S. personnel will not participate in these clearing operations. The British will be involved and may be sending some very sophisticated mine detecting equipment. We have no information concerning the cost of these operations to the U.S. We suggest that requests for more detailed information be referred to offices in the Department of Defense that are directly involved in the operation.

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PHOTOS OF OBSTRUCTIONS

Attached are 17 photos of obstructions in, or across the canal. These are all the obstructions that can be seen on photography. Many obstructions, including the sunken cement barges mentioned earlier, are below the surface and cannot be seen.

The photos are keyed to numbers on the briefing map; the top of the photos is north.

- Photo 1. The Port of Suez. Note sunken ship in berth in center of photo.
2. Passenger ship sunk in shipping channel.
 3. One of many pontoon bridges across the canal. These will present only minor clearing problems.
 4. Pontoon bridge, with trucks crossing.
 5. Sunken tanker.
 6. Pontoon bridge. Faint lines in canal above and below the bridge are floating POL and/or water pipelines.
 7. Israeli built causeway connected by pontoon bridge. Swing bridge at bottom of photo is disabled.
 8. Israeli built causeway and pontoon bridge. Faint line across canal at bottom of photo is floating pipeline.
 9. Pontoon bridge and floating pipeline.
 10. Small pontoon bridge probably used as support for POL and/or water pipeline and may be used also as a footbridge. Settlement is part of the town of Ismailia.
 11. Egyptian built earthen causeway completely obstructing canal.

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12. Largest of the pontoon bridges.
13. Merchant ships stranded in Great Bitter Lake; they have been there since 1967.
- 14, 15, 16. Pontoon bridges
17. Sunkon ship at Port Taufiq. This ship does not appear to be blocking the channel.

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